Chapter 42
IT'S BEEN A YEAR AND A HALF SINCE PRINCESS LINGLI WAS BORN.
SHE CAN RUN AROUND ON HER OWN NOW, A RECENT DEVELOP-MENT.
I CAN'T SAY I'M FOND OF CHILDREN ...
...BUT COMPARED TO THE BRATTY GIRLS SOLD INTO SERVICE AT THE BROTHEL WHOSE CARE WAS PALMED OFF ON ME...
...THE TOMBOY PRINCESS IS ADOR-ABLE INDEED.
I'M SURE IT WON'T BE LONG BEFORE THE PALACE FEELS TOO SMALL TO HER.
I THINK SHE'S ABOUT THE RIGHT AGE TO BE TAKEN FOR A WALK.
THE JADE PALACE DOES HAVE A LARGE COURT-YARD...
...BUT I'M SURE THE PRINCESS WILL TIRE OF ALWAYS SPENDING TIME IN THE SAME PLACES.

I ALWAYS IMAGINED THAT LADIES OF GOOD STOCK WOULDN'T PERMIT THEIR CHILDREN OUTSIDE...
...PREFERRING INSTEAD TO KEEP THEM CLOSE AND RAISE THEM SHELTERED FROM THE WORLD.
CONSORT GYOKUYO DOESN'T SEEM TO BE OF THE SAME MIND, THOUGH.
PERHAPS HER AMENABLE APPROACH ...
...COMES FROM BEING RAISED IN THE ARID REGION TO THE WEST, WHERE NO FOOT-BINDING CUSTOM EXISTS.
HERS MUST HAVE BEEN A LIBERAL UPBRINGING COMPARED TO MOST OF THE OTHER CONSORTS.
SO?
WHAT DO YOU THINK, MAO-MAO?
HUH?! ME?
I THINK IT'D BE BEST FOR HER HEALTH...
...IF SHE HAD MORE OPPORTUNITIES TO GO OUTSIDE.
ALL RIGHT, THEN! LET'S TALK!
SMILE

A FEW DAYS LATER
THE PRINCESS WAS GIVEN PERMISSION TO GO ON AN OUTING...
...WITH AN ESCORT MADE UP OF THE HEAD LADY-IN-WAITING, A SECOND LADY-IN-WAITING, AND TWO EUNUCH GUARDS.
THIS FEELS EXCESSIVE FOR A MERE WALK...
...BUT GIVEN THAT ALL OF THE EMPEROR'S CHILDREN SO FAR HAVE DIED VERY YOUNG...
...IT MAKES SENSE.
THE HEAVILY PREGNANT CONSORT GYOKUYO IS STAYING AT HOME AS A PRE-CAUTION.
YOU KNOW A LOT ABOUT FLOWERS AND ANIMALS, MAOMAO...
...SO COULD YOU PLEASE TEACH THE PRINCESS ABOUT THEM WHILE YOU'RE OUT ON THE WALK?
MY LADY, I MUST PROTEST. MAOMAO WON'T TEACH HER ANYTHING PROPER.
I THINK IT WOULD BE QUITE BENEFICIAL, THOUGH.
AFTER ALL, YOU NEVER KNOW WHERE MARRIAGE MAY TAKE YOU.

IN ANOTHER TEN YEARS OR SO, PRINCESS LINGLI MAY BE MARRIED OFF.
WHILE IT WOULD BE NICE IF SHE WERE GIVEN TO AN IMPERIAL SUBJECT AS A BRIDE...
...SHE COULD END UP MARRYING INTO A FAMILY FROM ANOTHER COUNTRY, AND THERE'S NO GUARANTEE THAT THE WELCOME THERE WOULD BE A WARM ONE.
SIGH
OH, ALL RIGHT.
IT SEEMS HONGNIANG HAS, IN ONE WAY OR ANOTHER, PUT TWO AND TWO TOGETHER AS WELL.
CONSORT GYOKUYO REALLY IS CUNNING TO REALIZE THAT IT WOULD BE A BOON FOR HER DAUGHTER...
...TO HAVE KNOWLEDGE OF MEDICINES AND POISONS BOTH.

Chapter 42 The Cat

EEE
EEE!
THE YOUNG PRINCESS WALKING WITH HER RETINUE OF EUNUCHS AND LADIES-IN-WAITING NATURALLY DREW ATTENTION.
THE REAC-TIONS WERE MIXED.
SOME BROKE OUT INTO SMILES.
SOME TOOK A STEP BACK UPON REALIZING WHO SHE WAS.
OTHERS WATCHED HER WITH INDESCRIB-ABLE EXPRES-SIONS ON THEIR FACES.
THEY ALL HAD THEIR OWN OPINIONS ABOUT HER.
I'M SURE THE PRINCESS WILL ONE DAY COME TO KNOW WHAT THOSE GAZES MEAN.

SHE GETS HER BRAVERY FROM HER MOTHER, NO DOUBT.
AH!
AH!
INSTEAD, SHE'S INTERESTED IN EVERY-THING...
...AND ISN'T AFRAID TO APPROACH.
I THOUGHT SHE MIGHT BE SCARED OR CRY...
...AT THE SIGHT OF SO MANY STRANG-ERS FOR THE FIRST TIME...
...BUT I GUESS I NEEDN'T HAVE WORRIED.
SHE PROBABLY THINKS SHE'S GOT IT RIGHT.
OHHH-AAAH!
THAT'S CALLED MUGWORT.
THAT... WASN'T PRINCESS LINGLI JUST NOW, WAS IT?
?
FWIP
MEW!
147

MEOOOW!
!
LOOK
キョロ
LOOK
キョロ
UH-OH.
YOUR HIGH-NESS?
TEP
TEP
TEP
MAO!
MEOOOOW...
YOUR HIGH-NESS, WAIT!

MAO-MAO!
MAO! MAO!
I'LL GO TAKE A LOOK.
YOUR HIGH-NESS, YOU CAN'T GO IN THERE!
MYAH!
TREMBLE
ふる
ふる
TREMBLE
WRIGGLE
もじ
もじ
WRIGGLE
...A KITTEN?

MAO!!
I DON'T RECALL ANY CONCUBINES KEEPING PETS AT THE INNER COURT JUST NOW.
HOW ODD.
SHE'S TELLING ME TO CATCH IT, ISN'T SHE?
.....
HISSS
OH WELL. LET'S DO THIS.
にじり CREEP
にじり... CREEP
150

FWOOSH
ふぁ
わっ
HIIIISS
RGH...

THIS WHAT YOU'RE AFTER?
o o o o o o

I WAS, YES.
THANK YOU VERY MUCH.
ACK!
WERE YOU NOT?
?
...UH, HUH?
IT LOOKED TO ME LIKE YOU WERE TRYING TO CATCH IT JUST NOW.
IT MIGHT BE HUNGRY.
OKAY!
YOU CAN TAKE IT FROM HERE!
SHE'S WEARING THE ROBES OF A LAUNDRY MAID, SAME AS XIAOLAN...
...BUT I'VE NEVER SEEN HER AT THE LAUNDRY BEFORE.

L'MME SEE!
MAAAAA!!
MAOMAO, WHAT HAVE YOU GOT THERE?
A KITTEN.
IT SEEMS RATHER SCRAWNY, THOUGH.
OOOOOH!
I...I HAVE TO AGREE.
MAAAAA!
MAAAAA!
MAAAAA!
I THINK IT WOULD BE BEST IF WE REFRAINED FROM LETTING HER HIGHNESS PET IT.
...IT'S QUITE DIRTY.

BWAH!
UU!
WAAAAAAAAAAH!
IF SHE'S NO ONE'S PET, WHERE IN THE WORLD COULD SHE HAVE COME FROM?
AND SO...
...IT WAS DECIDED THAT I'D BRING THE KITTEN TO THE PHYSICIAN'S OFFICE FOR THE TIME BEING.
THERE, THERE.
AWWW!
NOD コク
MAAAAA!
SHALL WE TAKE IT IN FOR NOW?
I'LL GO AHEAD AND TELL THE OFFICIALS ABOUT IT.

PERMISSION IS REQUIRED TO KEEP A PET AT THE INNER COURT.
THERE ARE ALSO REGULATIONS TO FOLLOW. FOR EXAMPLE, MALE AND FEMALE PETS OF THE SAME SPECIES MAY NOT BE KEPT AT THE SAME TIME...
...IN ORDER TO PREVENT BREEDING. ALSO, ALL MALES, EVEN ANIMALS, MUST BE CASTRATED.

OH, WHAT HAVE WE HERE? A KITTEN?
I FOUND HER.
AWW, SHE'S TREM-BLING!
LUCKILY, I JUST FINISHED BOILING SOME WATER.

COZY
COZY
LET'S POUR SOME HOT WATER INTO A BOTTLE WITH CLOTH WRAPPED AROUND IT...
...AND LEAVE IT HERE NEXT TO HER LIKE THIS.
YOU KNOW YOUR STUFF.

OH!
I'LL GO GET SOME FROM THE DINING HALL.
DO YOU HAVE ANY MILK SHE COULD DRINK?
HER BABY TEETH HAVE COME IN, BUT SHE APPEARS MALNOURISHED.
I TOO ONCE FOUND A STRAY LONG AGO.
SHE WAS ALSO A CUTE CALICO, LIKE THIS ONE.
HUH...
I WAS THINKING WE MIGHT USE SOME INTESTINE AS A SUBSTITUTE FOR THE TEAT OF THE MOTHER CAT.
SHE'S SO WEAK THAT I THINK SHE'LL HAVE TROUBLE DRINKING OUT OF A DISH.
WH-WHAT DO YOU NEED THAT FOR?!
ALSO ...
...IT WOULD BE GOOD TO HAVE A LENGTH OF ANIMAL INTESTINE.
DUE TO THE NATURE OF HIS POST, THE QUACK SHOULD HAVE A FAIR AMOUNT OF PULL AT THE DINING HALL TO GET US WHAT WE NEED.
OKAY.
I'LL ASK ABOUT THAT AS WELL.
THEY MUST BE PROCESSING LIVESTOCK SOMEWHERE TO MAKE SAUSAGES.

I GUESS I'LL JUST HAVE TO WIPE HER DOWN WITH A CLOTH INSTEAD.
I'LL USE OIL TO KILL THE FLEAS.
NOW, THEN.
I WANTED TO BATHE HER IN SOME HOT WATER...
...BUT I DON'T THINK SHE'LL BE ABLE TO STAND IT IN HER CONDI-TION.
THANK YOU.
THE INTES-TINES AS WELL.
I MANAGED TO GET US SOME GOAT'S MILK, MISSY!
THMP
THMP
THMP
AWW WW!♥
HOW CUTE! TOO ADOR-ABLE!
SLURP
SLURP

THAT NIGHT, THE EMPEROR VISITED THE JADE PALACE.
WITH A NAME LIKE YOURS, WHO BETTER THAN YOU TO SEE TO THE CREATURE?
HA HA...
MAO-MAO
...AND ORDERED ME TO HANDLE ITS CARE.
HE WAS UNABLE TO DENY HIS DAUGHTER'S PLEAS TO SEE THE KITTEN...
EVEN THE EMPEROR HAS HIS MOMENTS AS A DOTING FATHER.
MAO!
A FEW DAYS LATER

...I FILLED A BASIN WITH HOT WATER ...
SPLASH じゃぶ
SPLOSH じゃぶ
ONCE THE KITTEN WAS IN BETTER SHAPE...
...AND WASHED HER WITH SOME CRUMBLED BITS OF SOAP.
...BUT SHE RECOV-ERED WITHOUT ANY ISSUES ...
I WAS WORRIED THE GOAT'S MILK MIGHT NOT SIT WELL IN HER STOMACH ...
...AND I'VE STARTED GIVING HER PIECES OF SHREDDED CHICKEN TOO.
NYAM NYAM
...WHOA, THE WATER'S TURNING GREY.
HER UNDER-COAT WAS QUITE DIRTY TOO.
...SHE WENT TO RELIEVE HERSELF THERE ALL ON HER OWN.
PSSSS
WHEN I FILLED A WOODEN BOX WITH SAND AND PLACED IT ON THE FLOOR...

SNIP
...I TRIM AND CAREFULLY FILE HER CLAWS.
SINCE HER TEETH ARE STILL SMALL...
SNEAK
THE QUACK IS LOVINGLY HANDLING THAT PART FOR ME.
SHE'S STILL LEARNING TO DEFECATE, THOUGH, AND NEEDS A BIT OF STIMULATION AT HER REAR, LIKE A MOTHER CAT MIGHT DO WHILE GROOMING.
IT'S OKAY. DON'T WORRY!
MEW!
HOW GOES TAKING CARE OF THE BABY?
WE'VE BROUGHT SOME LITTLE FISH FOR THE KITTEN...
I...

I THINK THE KITTEN'S ALMOST READY FOR THE PRINCESS TO SEE.
HE SAYS IT SO CARE-FREELY.
MRRROW!
AWW, DON'T SWEAT THE SMALL STUFF!
LET'S BOIL THEM A BIT!
BUT I'M AFRAID I'LL BE AT A LOSS IF THIS LITTLE ONE SCRATCHES HER HIGHNESS OR RUNS OFF.
FEMALE, I SEE.
THAT'S RIGHT.
I'M GLAD WE WON'T HAVE TO CASTRATE HER.
SWIPE
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I GUESS I'LL BRING OUT SNACKS FOR TEA BY WAY OF AN APOLOGY.
DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT.
I SAID SOMETHING CALLOUS WITHOUT THINKING.
OH, FORGIVE ME.
URGH...
SAUSAGES MADE FROM LEFTOVER INTESTINES
NO, DEFINITELY SHOULDN'T SERVE THESE...
OH, THANK YOU.
SHIP
HERE, HAVE SOME RICE CRACK-ERS.

TOINK
TOINK
I'M NOT TERRIBLY FOND OF CATS.
SHAKE
SHAKE
YOU WANNA PLAY TOO?
164

ALL SET!
YES.
"CAT" + "CAT" = MAOMAO
猫猫
DESPITE YOUR NAME?
HERE, KITTY, KITTY!
C'MERE, KITTY!
BUT NOT NEARLY AS MUCH AS THOSE TWO.
I'M WITH YOU THERE.
YOU SEEM TO LIKE THEM, THOUGH, SIR JINSHI.
YES...
HOH?
...THEY LIKE HOW ENIGMATIC CATS ARE.
CAT FANCIERS CLAIM...

UH-HUH.
AND SOON THEY'RE LONGING TO PET THEM TOO.
THEY NEVER GROW TIRED OF WATCHING THEM, FINDING THAT THEY EVENTUALLY CAN'T TAKE THEIR EYES OFF OF THEM.

BUT THEY SEEM TO TAKE EXCEPTION TO THE OFTEN ALOOF NATURE OF CATS...
...WHICH ONLY GROWS WARM WHEN FOOD IS INVOLVED.
DEZAAR?
HMM?
R-RIGHT.

.....
BUT ONCE THEY'VE ALREADY BEEN SUCKED IN, ALL THEY CAN DO IS GIVE UP AND OVERLOOK THE FELINE'S QUIRKS.

BEFORE THEY KNOW IT, THEY'RE TRYING TO KISS THE CAT AGAINST ITS WILL...
...AND CAN'T RESIST TOUCHING THOSE SQUISHY PAW PADS...
...AND ARE DYING TO BURY THEIR FACES INTO THOSE SOFT, FURRY BELLIES, ALL WHILE KNOWING THAT PAINFUL SCRATCHES AWAIT.
BUT DOING THAT TO ANY ANIMAL WHEN YOU DON'T KNOW WHERE THEY'VE BEEN OR WHAT THEY'VE BEEN UP TO...
...IS JUST PLAIN UNSANITARY IN MY OPINION.
THEY SAY THEY CAN'T HELP THEM-SELVES.
HUUUFF!!

SIR JINSHI.
WHAT IN THE WORLD ARE YOU DOING?
HAAAAH...
AWww!
ME(OW) TOOOOOOO!
MM, I'M STARTING TO SEE THE LIGHT.

O...KAY...
IN THE END, WE COULDN'T FIGURE OUT WHERE THE KITTEN HAD COME FROM.
WE CONCLUDED THAT IT HAD SLIPPED IN ON A CART SUPPLYING FOOD...
...TO THE INNER COURT.
AS FOR WHAT BECAME OF THE CAT...

THE APOTHECARY DIARIES 8 • End

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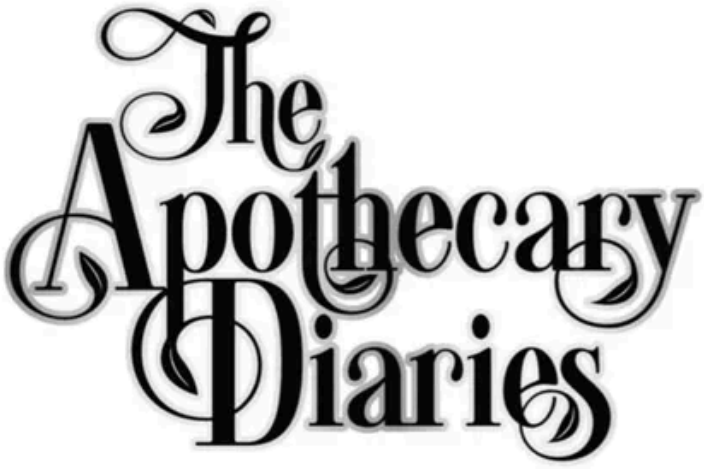
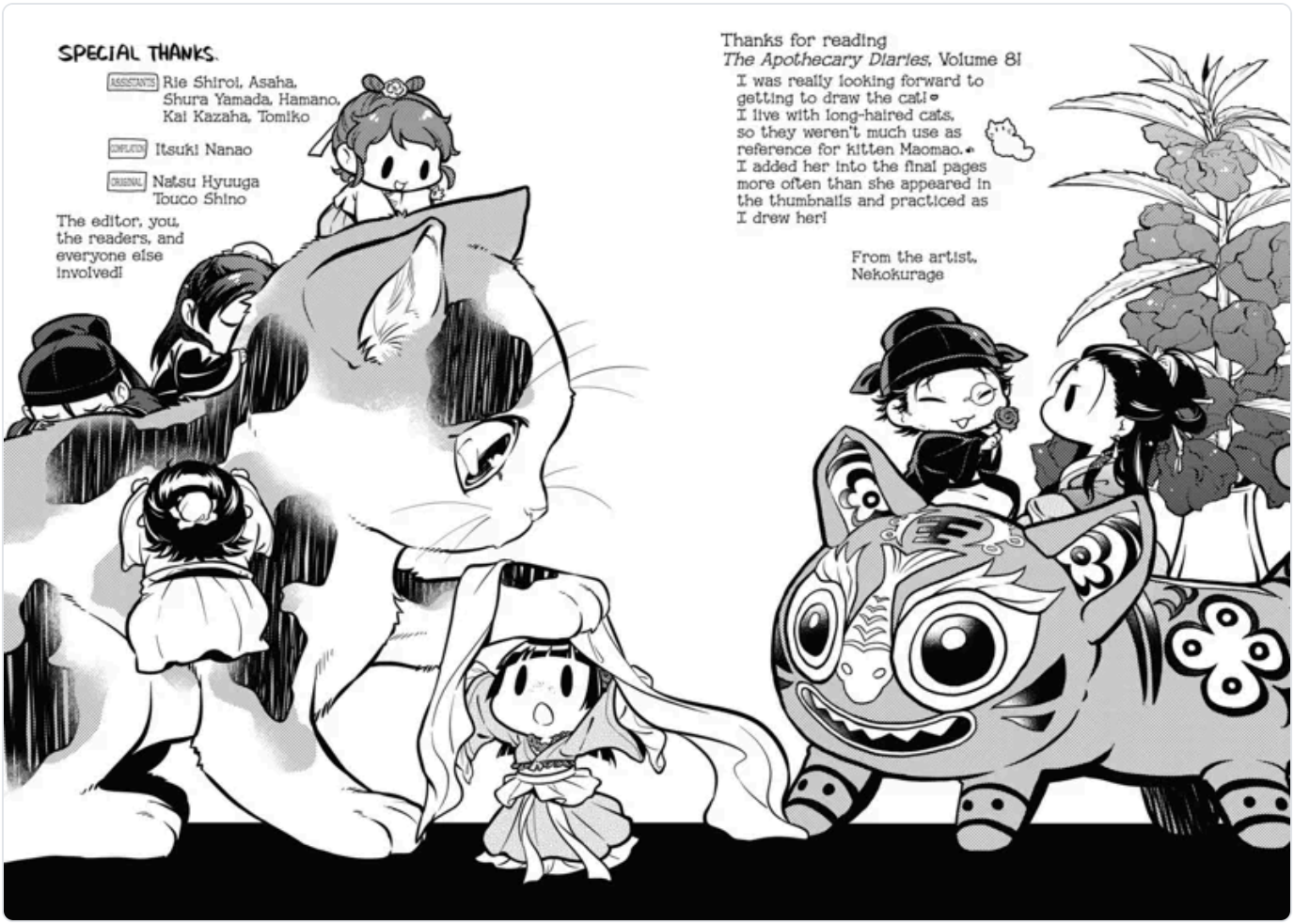
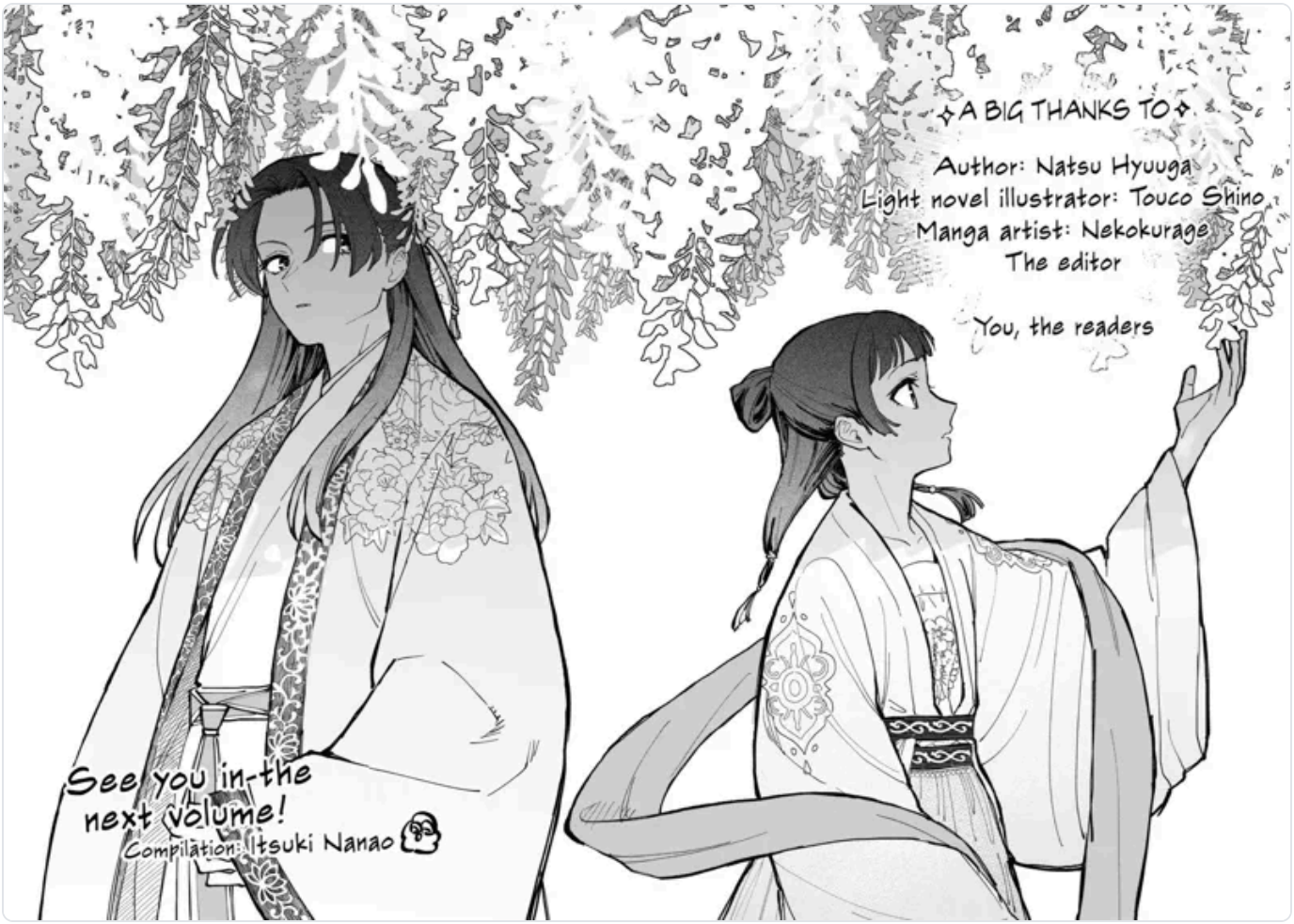
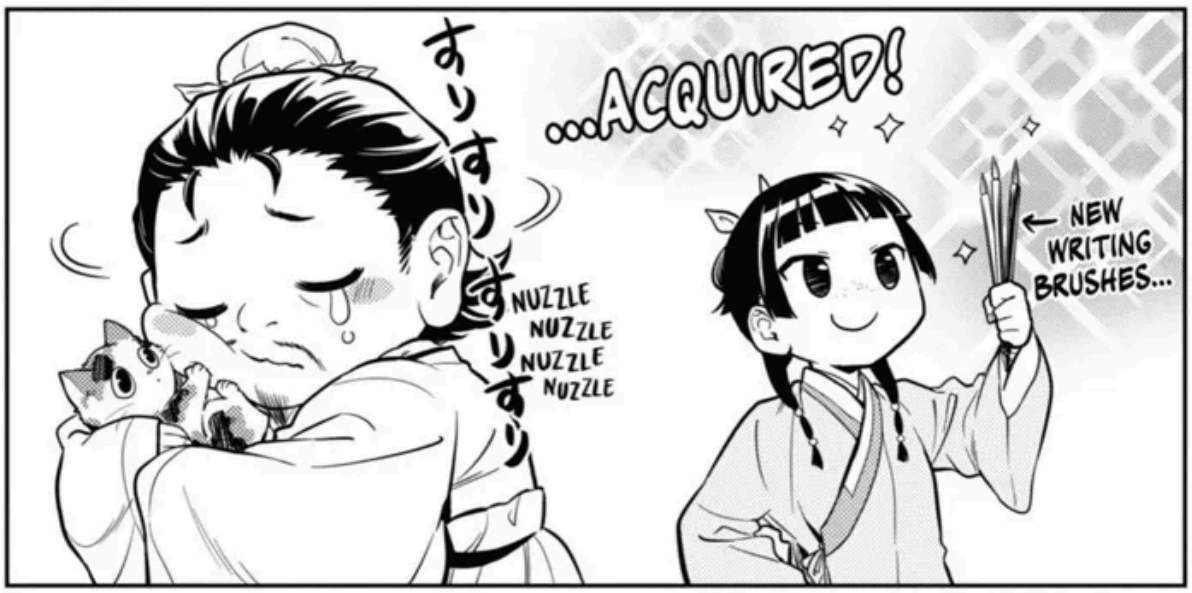

The Apothecary Diaries


SPECIAL THANKS.
ASSISTANTS Rie Shiroi, Asaha, Shura Yamada, Hamano, Kai Kazaha, Tomiko
COMPLETION Itsuki Nanao
ORIGINAL Natsu Hyuuga Touco Shino
The editor, you, the readers, and everyone else involved!
Thanks for reading *The Apothecary Diaries*, Volume 8!
I was really looking forward to getting to draw the cat! I live with long-haired cats, so they weren't much use as reference for kitten Maomao. I added her into the final pages more often than she appeared in the thumbnails and practiced as I drew her!
From the artist, Nekokurage


✧A BIG THANKS TO✧
Author: Natsu Hyuuga
Light novel illustrator: Touco Shino
Manga artist: Nekokurage
The editor
You, the readers
See you in the next volume!
Compilation: Itsuki Nanao



Story by Itsuki Nanao *Art by* Nekokurage

LIQUIFY ②
LIQUIFY ①
FLOMP
YAAAWN
BLORP
PURRFECTLY ADOOORABLE!
THE PEOPLE HERE ARE MELTING TOO.
IT'S AS IF SHE'S TURNING TO LIQUID, LITTLE BY LITTLE.
Story by Itsuki Nanao
Art by Nekokurage